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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 PORT AU PRINCE 001308

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SUBJECT: HAITI MONTHLY: JULY, 2007

REF: PORT AU PRINCE 829

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Classified By: Ambassador Janet A. Sanderson, reason 1.5(b) and (d).

¶1. (U) With this message, post initiates a monthly report on various topics of interest which do not merit a full reporting cable.

¶2. (C) BOB MANUEL, PHONE HOME. Preval intimate, Bob Manuel, who left Haiti a few months ago in a fit of pique pleading poverty, is currently living in Guatemala. He reports that he expects to be named Charge d'Affaires to Guatemala. Other sources claim he will be named Ambassador. Preval has avoided selecting new ambassadors, who must be confirmed by the Senate, to avoid duking it out with those who wish to give the plum assignments to political cronies and family members. Ambassadors at-large are personal representatives of the Haitian president and do not require Senate confirmation. Manuel has frequently complained of serving the president and earning only a modest salary which cannot support his two-household lifestyle. (His Guatemalan wife refuses to live in Haiti.) He has also acknowledged that he does not get along with Preval's fiancée, Elisabeth Delatour. In telecon with Ambassador, Manuel was coy about job possibilities but did not deny it. He will return to Haiti for a week on August 8.

¶3. (SBU) IT'S BETTER WHEN YOU TRAVEL. A senior Ministry of Tourism official reports that Minister Delatour has enjoyed his visits abroad to foster Haitian tourism and investment. The Minister routinely receives USD 600/night for per diem and enjoys the use of a government credit card. Discretionary income, available for entertaining and other miscellaneous items, is USD 10,000 per trip. And of course, the minister flies business class. According to a career civil servant who runs Port-au-Prince's annual Carnaval, word about the Minister's flush travel budget has caused a major stir in the ministry. No travel vouchers are filed.

¶4. (SBU) CUBANS IN THE HOOD? Haitian residents report that Cubans working in teams of two are visiting neighborhoods in Port-au-Prince toting back-packs filled with low-energy light bulbs. The Cubans are reportedly going door-to-door asking residents to turn in their 60 watt incandescent light bulbs

in exchange for free, lower-energy 7 watt fluorescent bulbs as part of a new GoH energy-saving initiative. President Preval announced April 29 following the ALBA Summit in Venezuela that with assistance from Cuba, the GoH will replace 2 million light bulbs to save the country 60 megawatts of electricity (reftel).

15. (U) "DIGICEL" SENDING STRONG SIGNAL. Haitians in Port-au-Prince are jokingly referring to the Haitian National Police Academy's 18th Promotion as "Digicel." The nickname implies that the 537 newly-minted Haitian National Police (HNP) officers now on active duty are increasingly present in the city, much like the popular Digicel cell phones (Note: Digicel, a mobile telecommunications operator in the Caribbean, recently celebrated its one year anniversary in Haiti with 1.4 million subscribers. End note). The recently graduated recruits from the Police Academy are part of a government effort to reform and rebuild the HNP.

16. (SBU) PROFILE: JUDICIAL POLICE (DCPJ) DIRECTOR FRANZ THERMILUS. HNP Director General Mario Andresol appointed Frantz Thermilus as the new DCPJ Director on July 6. Thermilus is in his early forties and is married with children. He was active in grassroots political organizations in the past but firmly claims that he was/is not an Aristide supporter. He served as an assistant to Commissar Jeannot Francois in the Bureau of Criminal Affairs in 1999, and was named Commissar when Francois became DCPJ Director. In 2004, Thermilus won a scholarship to attend the French Gendarmerie Academy in Melun, France. When he returned a year later, then HNP Director General, Leon Charles, considered him AWOL. The US and French Embassies tried unsuccessfully to interdict on his behalf for reinstatement. In 2005, Mario Andresol appointed Thermilus chief of General Intelligence at the HNP, a post which he occupied until his current appointment. Known as a strong Christian, his reputation for

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honesty may have influenced his nomination, as Andresol is on a campaign to purge the HNP of corrupt individuals.

17. (SBU) NEW PAP MAYOR AND CENTRAL GOVERNMENT JOSTLE FOR PRIMACY. With a new mayor in place in the capital, the central government is finding that it can no longer impose its will on the city unchallenged. When the informal market in front of Port-au-Prince's cathedral burned, leaving hundreds of vendors without space, President Preval publicly said that this was an excellent opportunity for the city to take back the streets. He castigated PAP's lack of urban planning, which enabled businesses and markets to spring up unchecked in public space, and promised to build a new market. In the meantime, he said, the space in front of the cathedral was off limits. Newly elected mayor, Jean-Yves Jason, took to the airwaves and told the street vendors the space was still theirs and within 72 hours they were back in business. Preval held a three-day training session for mayors to foment better working relations between municipal authorities and the central government. Preval told the Ambassador that in particular he wants them to understand that they cannot exercise absolute authority over their cities and towns, cannot establish their own police or security force, and cannot run programs without some central input.

18. (SBU) CITE SOLEIL RESIDENTS WARY OF POLICE. Residents of Cite Soleil report that they are nervous about the impending return of Haitian National Police (HNP) to Cite Soleil. The HNP, they said, have a reputation of brutality and corruption, having collaborated with the gangs and abused innocent civilians when they last had a permanent presence in the neighborhood. Residents stated that they would prefer to have MINUSTAH as their sole source of protection. However, they lamented that the members of the new Brazilian battalion, which arrived in June, are not as vigilant as the

previous group and allow known gang members to circulate freely in the neighborhood. The best situation would be for MINUSTAH to intensify patrols and for the HNP to stay away, according to these residents. (Note: While this may reflect popular sentiment based on past HNP abuse, it runs completely counter to our HSI objectives to get HNP actively engaged back in Cite Soleil. End note).

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